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ABSTRACT

This booklet is designed to give Peace Corps country directors, staff, and volunteers ideas and examples of how they can assist youth-at-risk through government agencies and private organizations working with youth in their host countries. It begins with an overview of the problems of youth-at-risk, followed by six scenarios. Each scenario is designed to stimulate thought about greater Peace Corps involvement in youth programs already in place, as well as to encourage the development of new program initiatives. The scenarios illustrate a range of possible program areas and volunteer roles based on a composite of what other organizations around the world have done. Each scenario includes: (1) a profile of a youth-at-risk affected by a specific problem addressed in that scenario; (2) a problems statement; (3) a discussion of the problem; and (4) possible Peace Corps involvement in addressing the problems based on a hypothetical situation developed from the experiences of other organizations serving youth-at-risk in one or more countries. The final section addresses the possibility of volunteers working with youth-at-risk as a secondary assignment. (JB)

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Peace Corps' Rededication to Youth

Addressing the needs of youth-at-risk

Youth Development Coordinator
Office of Training and Program Support
Peace Corps/Washington, D.C.

September 1992

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Dear Peace Corps Friends:

Currently, there are an estimated 100 million children struggling to survive on the streets in developing countries around the world. Their circumstances are tragic and they are in desperate need of assistance. Disadvantaged youth are both a tremendous problem as well as a tremendous resource.

The issue of street children has recently become a focus for Peace Corps programming. This booklet — "Peace Corps Re-Dedication to Youth: Addressing the Needs of Youth at Risk" — was created to outline not only the problem, but also possible strategies which will address the needs of this growing sector of the world's population.

By providing impoverished children with the tools they need to lead more productive lives, the Peace Corps will have a positive impact on one of the most serious problems facing developing countries today. Thank you for your commitment to the Peace Corps Youth Development Initiative.

Sincerely,

Elaine L. Chao
Director

Peace Corps of the United States / Office of Training and Program Support

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INTRODUCTION

Peace Corps officials have traveled to all the regions of the world, speaking with heads of state, government officials, and Peace Corps staff about the needs of their respective countries and what additional roles the Peace Corps can play in development efforts.

Nearly everywhere, one strong and persistent response has been voiced — the need to address the burgeoning problems of children, mostly urban, in difficult circumstances, living on the streets and frequently subjected to the worst of a country's social and environmental ills.

Throughout mid-1990, a Peace Corps Youth Development Task Force examined the issues facing developing country youth through the filter of Peace Corps' mission and strengths. After consultation with professionals both inside and outside the agency, the Task Force recommended:

- continued support and expansion of traditional youth projects such as 4-H, scouting and sports;
- a new focus on urban troubled and forgotten youth, i.e., street children and school drop-outs who fall outside of traditional Peace Corps youth projects.

In April 1991, as a result of the Task Force recommendations, the organization was challenged to increase its assistance to youth by finding new ways to address their specific needs and by incorporating attention to youth in all programming whenever possible.

In honor of Peace Corps' 30th anniversary, 1991 was declared the agency's year of "Rededication to Youth," focusing on increasing Peace Corps' awareness of and commitment to addressing the problems faced by youth throughout the world.

The agency established the Youth Development Sector, within the Office of Training and Program Support (OTAPS), and made a commitment to provide funds, consultant expertise,

and Volunteers to work with host countries in these vital areas. OTAPS, through the Youth Development Sector, supports the implementation of this new initiative by:

- providing youth-related information, technical assistance and training to all Peace Corps programs;
- advocating youth issues within the agency;
- linking Peace Corps' youth efforts to those of other national and international organizations.

In August 1991, all Country Directors were challenged to develop and/or expand youth programs in their own countries to address the needs of children in difficult circumstances. Three youth development pilot countries, Belize (Inter-America), Tunisia (PACEM), and Namibia (Africa), were selected to have primary access to technical resources provided by the Youth Development Sector including:

- needs assessments;
- project development;
- pre-service training design;
- in-service training design and implementation;
- project evaluation.

Youth development activities in these countries will be monitored and evaluated and the results will be shared with the field as an attempt to provide more effective programs.

In addition, Peace Corps staff of other countries who are giving serious consideration to developing youth projects have been urged to continue to promote youth development projects and to maintain regular contact with the Youth Development Coordinator.

This booklet is designed to give Peace Corps Country Directors, staff and Volunteers ideas and examples of how they can assist youth-at-risk through government agencies and private organizations working with youth in their host country.

The purpose of this booklet is to:

- sensitize Country Directors, staff, and Volunteers to the global and personal needs of youth-at-risk.
- stimulate the interest of Country Directors, staff, and Volunteers in youth-at-risk programming possibilities.
- give Country Directors, staff, and Volunteers practical, realistic examples of how to initiate and/or expand youth-at-risk programming.
- illustrate that youth-at-risk programming is a legitimate development effort addressing the needs of a country's development plan.

The booklet begins with an overview of the problem of youth-at-risk followed by six scenarios. Each scenario is designed to stimulate thought about greater Peace Corps involvement in youth programs with projects already in place, as well as encourage the development of new program initiatives. They illustrate a range of possible program areas and Volunteer roles based on a composite of what other organizations around the world have done. Each scenario includes:

- a profile of a youth-at-risk affected by a specific problem addressed in that scenario;
- a problem statement;
- a discussion of the problem;
- a possible Peace Corps involvement in addressing the problem based on a **hypothetical situation** developed from the experiences of other organizations serving youth-at-risk in one or more countries.

The final section addresses the possibility of Volunteers working with youth-at-risk as a secondary assignment.

A GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

In November 1991, Marilyn Rocky, National Director of *CHILDHOPE USA*, testified before the US House of Representatives Select Committee on Hunger about the problems of street children worldwide. *CHILDHOPE* is an international advocacy organization working on behalf of street children. The following summarizes much of Ms. Rocky's testimony that provided a global perspective on the problem.

An estimated 100 million children and youth of the developing world live or spend most of their time on the streets. If all street children were isolated in one area, they would represent the tenth largest country in the world, falling between the populations of Pakistan and Mexico.

As many as 75 percent live at home but are forced to work and contribute to the family income with such jobs "on" the street as shining shoes, selling newspapers, hauling garbage, begging, or prostitution. The remaining 25 percent are children "of" the street, who live, work and sleep on city streets maintaining few – if any – ties with their families. They band together, forming surrogate families because their own families and societies have left them to fend for themselves.

This combined group has, and still remains, largely ignored. They do not appear in health statistics, education systems, or national census. Moreover, they are seen as a public nuisance. And in some countries, such as Brazil, they have become the targets of death squads who willfully torture and murder street children as a solution to growing crime statistics.

In 1950, 17 percent of the population of developing countries lived in cities, compared to 32 percent in 1988. Much of this migration has been youth and young families in search of work. In Latin America, for example, an estimated 77 percent of youth ages 15 to 24 will live in cities by the year 2000, compared to 70 percent of the population as a whole.*

Urbanization and its underlying causes — debt, economic

stagnation, deforestation, rapid population growth, unsustainable agriculture practices, and government policies — have subsidized urban dwellers at the expense of rural farmers. As a result, increasing numbers of families and youth have moved to cities in search of economic opportunities.

In addition, war, civil strife, and armed violence have forced families and unaccompanied minors to urban areas. Victims of this strife are left without a family's safety net and become candidates for street life. Furthermore, natural and man-made disasters have added to the difficulty of those in already desperate circumstances in the urban centers.

As more and more families in the developing world settle in marginal areas near large cities, they will continue to lose the social and kinship networks found in rural areas. The side effects of this increasingly urban-based poverty are devastating:

- a lack of access to education;
- the break-up of families;
- under- and malnourishment;
- inadequate health services;
- susceptibility to infectious diseases;
- vulnerability to AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases;
- physical and sexual abuse;
- drug abuse;
- prostitution.

All of these side effects directly affect the children of these poor urban dwellers, forcing an increasing number of children to turn to the streets in order to contribute to their family's meager income. In addition, urbanization and the lure of the city continues to draw children from the rural areas to the city's streets where their peers become their source of family.

Therefore, this rapidly growing population of poor urban youth worldwide clearly stands out in many Peace Corps countries as one of the neediest groups and is a legitimate focus of Peace Corps programming.

*United Nations, 1988 Revision, Global Estimated and Projects of Population by Age and Sex, NY 1988.

AN OUTREACH CENTER FOR STREET CHILDREN:
Serving Their Basic Needs

Yasir at 13 is a veteran of the streets. When only 11, he rode atop the train from his village 800 miles south of the capital city, lured by rumors of work and a life of adventure, pushed by the poverty of his family of 12.

Like most street boys and girls, what he found was much different. Mornings were spent in the markets begging and stealing. Because he was young and on new turf, he found support from other street boys. They watched out for each other like a family. But he quickly learned there were dangers and prices to pay for this safety.

Some of the older boys threatened to hurt him if he didn't steal for them. At night they forced him to have sex with them. To protect themselves from physical and sexual abuse, the younger boys slept in front of the police station each night. Although exposure on cold rainy nights frequently brought illness, local hospitals and clinics refused to serve the street children.

After two years, Yasir grew tired of the street life and returned home to see his family. But he found conditions worse than when he had left. The region had been hit by drought, driving thousands of people to his village in search of food and leaving even less for village families. Consequently, Yasir's youngest brother had died from malnutrition.

Rather than being welcomed by his family, Yasir found they could not provide for him. The slow pace of village life made him restless, having grown accustomed to the freedom and independence of street life. Left with little choice, Yasir once again crept aboard the train headed slowly toward the capital, but with much less enthusiasm than two years before.

Perched on the top of the last rail car, Yasir gazed at the stars, his thoughts vacillating between childhood dreams of owning lorries that carried goods across the border, and the realities of facing adulthood on the streets at 15. As he fell asleep to the rocking motion of the train, the glimmer of hope still burning in his heart was greater, if only for the moment, than the hunger in his stomach.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are thousands of children working and/or living on the streets of the capital cities and secondary towns of nearly every Third World country. These youth have little, if any, nutritious food; no access to bathing facilities; no voice, advocate, or access to vitally needed medical and social services; no outlet to organized recreational or athletic activities; and little positive peer or adult influence.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

Many residents of cities dislike street children and feel they are a nuisance at best, and thieves and robbers at worst. They are refused assistance at public facilities such as hospitals, clinics, and social services. Many come from the shanty towns surrounding the city, where their families eke out a meager living. Others travel on top of a train, lorry or bus from distant villages to urban centers.

Police are more often the enemy and not the protectorate of street children. The police sometimes raid the market place, round the children up and beat and/or jail them. In several cities, children have been murdered by death squads alleged to be connected with the police. In other places, police tacitly assist street children by allowing them to sleep outside the station where they are less subject to attack from older street children or men.

The governments, distracted by war, drought and disastrous economies, do not officially recognize children as a priority problem and typically have no money for programs that address their needs. Numerous international organizations focus on children's programs, but few have committed funds to street children programs. Several local NGOs are doing relief work with families in the shanty towns surrounding the capital but are not involved with street children.

PEACE CORPS INVOLVEMENT

<u>Contacts For Possible Collaboration</u>

The Ministry of Social Welfare is the government body responsible for coordinating social services, and therefore

responsible for planning and coordinating local and international services to street children. Regional government offices located in the major cities and towns and local village committees usually receive approval for any new initiatives from the Minister's office. The government offices are not well equipped to organize or implement projects for street children.

UNICEF's office of Children In Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC), located in the capital, has offered some seed money, technical assistance, training and material resources to three international PVOs planning services for the street children.

Three international PVOs — Plan International, CARE and Save the Children — operate projects in three separate cities – the capital and two provincial cities, where large numbers of street children reside. Each PVO has agreed to a preliminary collaborative plan to establish a day center for street children in each of the three cities. In the capital city, one local development organization is participating in the plan and will eventually operate the project independently of the international PVO.

Initial inquiries have been made with bilateral donors such as USAID and the Dutch government and with religious funding organizations in Germany, Switzerland, and Canada.

Representatives of local business and service clubs and high government and university officials have expressed interest in helping address the problems of street children and several have offered either to contribute financially, serve on a board, or work as a volunteer.

Proposed Outreach Center Activities

- Sports project
- Meals
- Showers and laundry
- Basic medical services
- Arts/crafts/drama
- AIDS/health education
- Basic education
- Counseling — personal, drug abuse

Possible Future Activities

Vocational training
Street Education project
Small Business project

Possible Peace Corps Project Activities

Use current Volunteers who have available time to assist the three NGOs with logistics, surveys, research and proposal writing connected with initial planning and development of the three centers.

Assist in the design and implementation of educational materials and teach basic education.

Organize and implement a sports project and train its counterparts.

Assist with fundraising, program planning, management, operations, and logistical and organizational support.

Organize and teach an arts, crafts and/or drama program and train a counterpart.

Develop a street education program and assist in training local street educators.

Plan, organize and implement a vocational training program in conjunction with existing vocational training programs in the cities.

Tap the energy and resources of residents, service club members and private business and professional people, who express interest in helping street children, to volunteer in assisting in center activities such as fundraising, medical assistance, tutoring, recreational/ sports activities, arts, crafts, drama or music.

Design a community education/public relations program to improve the image of and interest in street children including TV, radio, street theater, news and feature articles.

STREET CHILDREN AND AIDS:
An Urgent Need

Giselle had trouble in school. She was a rebellious twelve-year-old who was caught stealing. In addition, she was sleeping around with boys and men who paid her school fees. These activities brought shame to her family and punishment and condemnation to Giselle. She refused to heed her parents admonitions and rather than go home to face the family's harsh treatment and constant badgering, she began staying out all night with friends on the streets. The longer she stayed away, the greater became her fear of going home to face her family.

Forced to fend for herself, Giselle bartered sex for food, clothing, money and other basic necessities of life. She became more independent and began going dancing and making a living sleeping with the men she met at the bars. At 13, she contracted AIDS and by 15 she was seriously ill. Her family took her in during the last few months of her young life, knowing she was very ill, but unaware she had AIDS. A local doctor gave her as much comfort as possible during the final months of her life.

Three years ago Juan ran away from home at the age of nine. He had become very unhappy and bitter when his father died. This led to poor academic performance and misbehavior in school. His mother tried to provide the necessary discipline and direction he needed, but because she worked ten hours a day in a laundry, she had little time or energy to spend with Juan and his five brothers and sisters.

He was sent to live briefly with his aunt and uncle, but began skipping school and running with friends on the street during the day. His uncle beat him and eventually sent him back to his mother. Finally, Juan left home and spent all his time on the streets, working at odd jobs like selling candy and shining shoes.

He trusted his best friends and tried to sleep close to them at night in front of the police station. But being so young, it was easy for older boys to take advantage of him and force him to have sex with them. The longer he was on the street, the more common sex became among the street boys and girls.

Most of the time Juan was hungry because the work he found was not enough to buy much food. To dull the hunger pains, he began sniffing glue and gasoline. Wanting more money, he occasionally supplemented his small income by homosexual pick-ups with older men. He didn't like doing this, but it was better than being hungry. Nobody ever told him about the dangers these activities would pose to his life.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Street children and other children in difficult circumstances are particularly vulnerable to contracting the HIV virus and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) due to their proximity to and activity with other high-risk adult populations. Street life exposes them to sexual exploitation, prostitution and/or sexual abuse by older street youth and adults who may be carrying the HIV virus or other STDs. This is particularly true of street girls who often make their living as prostitutes. Heterosexual and homosexual activity among street children is common. Drug, alcohol and other substance abuse frequently increases their susceptibility to sexual activity and abuse.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are 8 million people infected with the HIV virus in the world today, over 5 million in Africa alone. By the year 2000, experts predict there will be 40 million people infected, 80 percent in the developing world. Moreover, 10 million children will become orphans from parents who have died from AIDS. Most of those orphans will be in the developing world and it is likely that a large percentage of them will end up as street children as well.

In some countries in Latin America and Africa, the rate of AIDS infection among the adult population is over 30 percent. There are no reliable statistics on the prevalence of AIDS among street children, but given their exposure to high risk populations, it can be assumed that rates of infection may now be as high in some countries and will increase rapidly in the future. This is particularly true among street girls who are involved in "survival sex" where they have little control over whether the partner uses a condom or not. This exposure also

subjects them to other STDs, which in some developing countries is as great a threat — if not greater — to their health than is AIDS.

Street children are among the most neglected and abused groups in any community. They have little or no access to community clinics, hospitals, schools or other public services, television or written materials and therefore few opportunities to be educated about AIDS, its transmission and methods of prevention. Word of mouth is the strongest communicator among street children and there are few positive street informants accurately describing the dangers of AIDS and how it can be prevented.

Street children are at an impressionable age when behavior patterns are being established and can still be changed. It is therefore important that they understand the types of behavior that will protect them so that they can make intelligent and lifesaving decisions.

PEACE CORPS INVOLVEMENT

Contacts For Possible Collaboration

The National AIDS Committee located in the Ministry of Health has primary responsibility for coordinating AIDS activities, including developing and implementing the country's AIDS prevention plan.

WHO lends technical assistance to National AIDS Committee activities in most countries. UNICEF collaborates closely at various levels with WHO, National AIDS Committees and NGOs working with AIDS programs. Many international, non-governmental organizations (e.g. Save the Children, Plan International, Concern, Street Kids International) or local organizations have plans for or are already working in AIDS-related programs.

Several international organizations such as Population Services International and The Futures Group are collaborating with host country governments in social marketing programs that sell products such as condoms through the commercial private sector at subsidized prices. Government donors such as USAID (the largest bilateral donor to AIDS programs) support many of the above-mentioned projects.

Possible Project Activities

Assist an organization in conducting qualitative and quantitative research that surveys the knowledge, attitudes and practices of children-at-risk and developing strategies to best address their needs.

Train street children to be peer educators (AIDS experts say peer education is the most effective means of influencing behavior).

Assist local health committees, regional health offices or ministry officials to include street children in AIDS education plans and existing programs.

Link existing NGO AIDS projects with street children.

Develop/adapt and distribute AIDS materials to street children.

Train local NGO staff or counterparts to be street educators in AIDS education.

Develop puppet and/or street theater programs to educate children (as is being done by the Africa Research Education Puppetry Program in South Africa).

Show AIDS education films and videos (such as those designed especially for street children like the cartoon Karate Kid produced by Street Kids International which has accompanying manual and comic books) from mobile vans or at the local cinema or community center.

Target AIDS education to schools where dropout rates are high, rural and urban, that may be the source of future street children.

Develop counseling and care programs for street children with AIDS.

ARTISAN APPRENTICESHIPS:
An Opportunity for Future Employment

Bokarie is energetic and enterprising. At 14, he had more street vending experience than most of his peers. He started at age five when his mother carried him with her each day to the market where she sold flowers. When Bokarie was four, his mother was forced to work on the streets after her husband died. There were three other children all older than Bokarie and they too worked on the streets to help the family survive.

Because Bokarie was strong and fast, he was not bullied or abused by older boys on the street. He washed cars, carried bags for people in the market, shined shoes — anything he could find to do to make money.

When Bokarie was nine his mother died leaving all of the children to fend for themselves. During the last five years of his mother's life, street life had separated Bokarie from his brothers and sisters, making life even more difficult. Traditionally, they had pooled their resources and shared food, but when their mother died they felt less drawn to return home and eventually all went their own way.

Bokarie missed having a home, even the cramped one-room house made of cardboard he and his family used to live in near the river. It had at least provided a place to be safe and away from the streets. He had also grown very tired of having to scavenge, beg and steal to survive when he couldn't find any way to make money. He longed to go to school and someday have a family and home of his own. That seemed a distant dream most of the time, but Bokarie somehow maintained hope through the toughest times on the street.

Some street educators from a local organization told Bokarie about a new program they were about to start that would train him in auto mechanics and help him find temporary work while he was in training. But Bokarie was leery of the idea and didn't know if he could trust these guys. He had heard rumors from other boys that this was a ploy by some people to get cheap labor without their really training anyone.

Nobody had ever given him any help before so why would he believe they would now?

But the street educators returned several times a week for several months sitting on the corner, drinking sodas with Bokarie, joking, and talking to him about what he really wanted to do with his life. He began to trust them a little more, if for no other reason than the fact that they kept coming back.

He had many doubts. Could he work in a place where somebody supervised him and told him what to do and when? He had only completed the third grade and didn't read very well. He was good with his hands and liked working on cars, but he would have to leave his friends from the street who had become his only family. Finally, he decided he would try the program. If he didn't like it, he could always leave and go back to the street.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Typically youth-at-risk have few employment options in the developing world. Frequently lacking sufficient education or training, they turn to such jobs as vending, shining shoes, washing or watching cars, carrying bags, begging, stealing, domestic help or prostitution. These jobs, with the exception of prostitution, provide meager incomes. Most, if not all, offer little future and have an adverse affect on their physical and mental health. There is a need for skill development, support and love that instills hope, builds confidence and self-esteem, and leads to more substantial employment or entrepreneurship. This is crucial if the cycle of poverty and oppressive and degrading work is to be broken and dignity restored.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

Youth from the slums, poor neighborhoods or those living on the street, even if in school, generally do not have the opportunities needed to be trained in a skill or trade that will lead to gainful employment. They often lack the sophistication, proper appearance or contacts to find employment with local artisans who could train them. Vocational training programs

are too expensive or otherwise inaccessible to these youth. Curricula and teaching techniques are often inappropriate to reach them.

Most developing country governments have not recognized or acknowledged the training and employment needs of youth-at-risk, particularly street children. They typically do not have the financial resources to devote to such special needs, and consequently, have not established training and employment programs.

Many local artisans are a potential resource that can provide not only skill training to youth but also the adult support, encouragement and direction that is often lacking in the lives of youth-at-risk. Tapping this resource, however, may not be easy because artisans may have no incentive, feel it is too time consuming or that they don't have the resources, equipment, or expertise to train someone.

PEACE CORPS INVOLVEMENT

Contacts For Possible Collaboration

An indigenous NGO working with youth-at-risk has received approval from the Ministry of Social Welfare to begin a project that will assist in matching youth-at-risk with local artisans to effect skills training in trades of interest to the youth. The program will focus particularly on hard-to-reach street boys and girls, including prostitutes.

A survey will be conducted of the various zones in the city to assess the number and types of artisans who would be willing to train apprentices for several months. These would include such trades as metal work, shoe making and repair, auto mechanics, carpentry, hair styling, sewing, and embroidery.

The apprenticeships will be accompanied by vocational training at existing vocational education programs run by the government, if such exist and an agreement can be reached. Job counseling skills, work ethics, personal hygiene, numeracy and literacy will be taught, in addition to technical training

As an incentive to the artisan, the NGO will offer technical assistance in marketing, management, bookkeeping, and access to small business loans to assist in improving and/or expanding the artisan's business. A revolving loan fund will be available for both the artisan and the youth to purchase necessary tools. The youth loans will be paid back once the youth find permanent employment.

Possible Peace Corps Project Activities

Use current Volunteers who have available time to assist the NGO in surveying the zones in the city to determine the number and type of local artisans and assess their interest in and capacity to train such youth.

Assist the Ministry of Education Vocational Training Department to develop special vocational training programs for youth-at-risk at existing vocational training institutes, including the development of a special curriculum.

Provide small business technical assistance to local artisans in bookkeeping, management, and marketing.

Provide technical assistance in establishing a revolving loan fund for artisans and apprentices.

Assist artisans in establishing apprenticeship training programs and in monitoring and evaluating the training.

Provide job counseling in the areas of work ethics, personal hygiene, numeracy and literacy, and other related job skills training.

Develop teaching material, guides, and manuals for each of the above areas.

STREET GIRLS:
Their Special Health Needs

Susanna was the oldest in a family of five brothers and four sisters. Her father, an alcoholic, was rarely home. Her mother worked in the market selling candy and, when she could afford materials, made baskets. Susanna was a bright and curious student, attending school each day and returning home before joining her mother to sell goods in the market.

One day when she was 12 years old, she came home from school and found her father at the house drunk. He attacked and raped her, and threatened to throw her out of the house if she told anyone. After this traumatic experience Susanna became very withdrawn. She refused to go to school and insisted she go directly to the market with her mother, over her mother's objections. Her mother tried desperately to get Susanna to talk about what was wrong but Susanna didn't think her mother would believe her.

Over the next few months Susanna's cheerful play and laughter disappeared. In an attempt to reverse this, her mother gave Susanna flowers to sell in the market, thinking this might help her forget about whatever was bothering her and regain her happy attitude. One day while selling on the street, a man reached out and pulled her into a car and drove away. Once again she was raped and then left on the street, physically and mentally injured.

Susanna was angry at her mother for forcing her to sell flowers. She hated herself, felt dirty, and was ashamed to go back home. For many days, she wandered the streets in a daze, speaking to nobody. One evening she found a knife and cut herself. Cecilia, a 15 year old street girl, found Susanna, took the knife from her, wrapped the cuts with an old rag and took her to Casa del Joven, a service for street children.

Susanna was treated by the nurse and given some food. After completing the meal, she told her new friend Cecilia she didn't want to stay there because they were the only girls at the house. For the next few months, Susanna stayed on the street with Cecilia and other street girls. First, they gave her

food but finally told her she would have to make her own money just as they did. They sometimes stole in the market, but most of the time they sold themselves in exchange for food, money and clothes. Susanna appreciated having the money, dreaded having to earn it this way, but found no other way to survive. She thought about going back to her mother, but was still too scared and angry.

For the next two years she survived on the streets. At 15, she became pregnant. The months leading up to the birth of her child were difficult. She longed for her mother's help and direction and finally got up enough courage to go back home. When she arrived, the neighbors had sad news for Susanna. Her mother had died a few months before, and her brothers and sisters had moved to a village several hundred miles away to stay with their aunt. Susanna was crushed by the news of her mother, but knew she couldn't go to the village because she would be seen as a disgrace to the family. With no other alternatives, Susanna returned to her companions on the street.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The lives of low-income urban young women living and/or working on the street, or in domestic and factory settings, are frequently characterized by early and sometimes unwanted high-risk pregnancies, early sexual initiation and abuse, police brutality, high levels of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS, mental health problems including drug abuse, hunger and inadequate nutrition. Many of these health problems are directly related to the status and work of young women, in the home, on the streets, in factories, or in domestic settings. In many cases, these young women are forced to drop out of school to care for younger siblings, work on the streets, or labor as domestics from an early age. In other cases, young women must work to support themselves and their own children.*

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

Low-income urban young women in developing countries are three times disadvantaged — coming from a low-income

family, being women, and being minors. While some attention has been given to women's status and health in the past decade, far less attention has gone to the needs of young women. The difficulties these young women face are a prelude to the lives they will likely endure as adult women in developing countries. With regard to their health status, the severe setbacks that start as early as birth have long-term ramifications for low-income women in developing countries.

For low-income young women in urban areas, there are a number of factors which place them in difficult circumstances and affect their physical and mental health. How they are viewed and what is expected of them by boys and men, family and society, are among the most important factors and probably the most difficult for individuals or organizations to influence or change. But this must be understood and acknowledged when attempting to address other factors such as their access to food, opportunity to go to and complete school, ability to work and earn a decent income, maintain their own health, and that of their children.

For example, UN figures show that, on the average, a woman in a developing country with zero years education has between six and seven children. A woman with seven or more years of education has between three and four children. While adequate statistics are not available of rural versus urban breakdown, young women's school enrollment rates continue to lag behind boys in Asia and Africa, while they are nearly equal in most of Latin America. Even where school enrollment rates have increased in recent years, millions of children and youth — both girls and boys — are forced to drop out of school.

Traditionally, girls in developing countries worked in the home in both rural and urban areas. In recent years, a growing number of young women are apparently working on the streets, or at least becoming more visible on the streets. Program officials who assist street and working children suggest that long-term economic difficulties are breaking down traditional family structures and support systems which once kept girls off the streets somewhat more than boys. Research and anecdotal evidence from several cities in developing countries show that between three and 30 percent of the population of working and

street children are girls. A higher percentage work rather than live on the streets and are concentrated more in market settings working alongside their mothers.

Low-income urban women, like their male counterparts, fall outside social and health services. To date, most services for street children worldwide have been directed to the needs of street boys and have simply added services for girls as an adjunct to that for boys. But recent experience shows that to be effective, services must be designed to address the specific needs and speak the language of the these high-risk young women based on a genuine understanding of their circumstances.

The programs must address issues of abortion, birth control, childbearing, maternal health, sexual abuse including incest and rape, police brutality, hunger, drug abuse, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, mental health problems related to depression and the loss of self-esteem, empowerment of women, and alternatives to prostitution and other degrading forms of work.

PEACE CORPS INVOLVEMENT

Contacts For Possible Collaboration

For the last 8 years, Casa del Joven, a local NGO, has operated the only outreach center for street children in the city, 95 percent of whom have been boys and young men. Only in the last three years have a few girls come to the center. However, a recent survey done by street educators from Casa del Joven and staff of the Ministry of Social Welfare estimated about 1,000 girls work and live on the streets, at least 400 of them prostitutes.

The survey results confirmed what Casa del Joven had suspected — that there is a great need to serve street girls and that the programs are not currently designed to attract and meet their specific needs. Casa del Joven has held preliminary meetings with the Ministry, with Save the Children, Oxfam UK, and Dutch and German donors about providing funds and technical assistance to establish a comprehensive street girl program. This would include street and peer educators, a clinic, a

residential program for young single mothers, and vocational training to help girls move away from prostitution.

A more comprehensive survey of street girls will be completed to determine specific needs. During the first year, Casa del Joven will purchase and begin an outreach center, train street and peer educators, raise the funds to begin a clinic and organize the vocational training program. They will also seek the cooperation of several local clinics to assist street girls until Casa's clinic is ready. The goal is to complete the clinic and begin the vocational training program by the end of the second year.

Peace Corps Project Activities

Use current Volunteers, who have available time and who have received some training from those who have worked with street girls, to assist other NGOs or the government in completing a final survey of street girls needs, prepare reports and distribute findings to appropriate government, NGO, and donor representatives.

Assist in writing funding proposals to international donors for support of street girl programs.

Assist in the development of special services in birth control, childbearing, maternal health, sex education, and AIDS and STD education, counseling and treatment.

Train street educators and peer educators to provide information and education to street girls.

Assist in the development of a health clinic and residential program.

Research and develop alternative work opportunities, income generating activities and vocational training programs.

Assist in the development of educational materials and curricula and teach basic education.

Design community education and public education programs to improve the image of, and interest in, street girls.

* The problem statement and discussion of the problem above are summarized, in part, from a special background report prepared by Gary Knaul Barker for a conference "Reaching The Hard-To-Reach: Health Strategies For Serving Urban Young Women" organized by CHILDHOPE held in Washington, D.C., December 3-4, 1991.

SPORTS:
Developing Leadership and Teamwork

Manuel has always been a talented athlete and is an especially good football player. When he was ten, Manuel played with the older boys and scored many goals. Even though he was smaller, the older boys respected his talent and toughness and didn't bully him.

As he grew older, Manuel became a natural leader among his friends both on and off the football field. He organized games and settled disputes that often broke out when they played on neighborhood streets.

Manuel's family was quite poor. He was the oldest child and expected to work after school to help support the family. Each afternoon and evening he went to the central city to shine shoes and sell candy.

Even on the streets Manuel was a leader. He organized his buddies into a profitable begging and pickpocket ring. He was fair to them and shared the profits equally among the group. Sometimes when they saw a poor old man or woman, he and his friends would share some of their money or food with them.

Downtown streets were not the place to play football. Occasionally one of the boys did find an old ball and they played in the park. But eventually the ball was run over in traffic or was stolen.

Manuel and his friends always talked about Jorge Vasquez, the best player on the country's national team. Manuel, like lots of boys his age, dreamed of playing for the national team. Each night as he returned home from downtown, he walked passed the lot where he used to play football with his neighborhood friends and remembered how great it was to score the winning goal.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are thousands of youth-at-risk in the capitals and major secondary cities of most countries. Many of these youth demonstrate leadership and organizational qualities among their peers, but often in non-constructive or illegal activities. They lack opportunities to develop these qualities in constructive activities which interest them, such as sports. A well-organized sports program can be a vehicle to teach them how to apply these skills to small business activities, health services, environmental education or other personal or community development needs.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

It is estimated that about 25 percent of the youth-at-risk live on the street and do not attend school. The other 75 percent do attend school, but are on the verge of becoming street children. Many in this latter group work on the street, but live with their families in very poor neighborhoods. Given the poor living environment from which they come, the youth have few opportunities to develop leadership, organization and team building skills or to use these skills in constructive activity that will help them lead more responsible and productive lives.

Unlike youth from the rural areas who have family and farm responsibilities after school, urban youth in poor neighborhoods have few such productive afterschool activities, and therefore have much idle time.

The Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Education have no financial resources to provide for extracurricular activities. In fact, there is a shortage of schools, books and supplies. Schools operate on double sessions and are still overcrowded.

PEACE CORPS INVOLVEMENT

<u>Contacts For Possible Collaboration</u>

The Ministry of Education held a sports conference in which all local sports groups and other local and international organizations working with youth-at-risk in the three cities

were invited to attend. The conferees agreed to develop a comprehensive sports program for all youth in the country's three major cities.

The government and five international and local NGOs agreed to collaborate on a project that will organize sports as the first step in developing initiative, team work, leadership, and organizational skills among youth-at-risk from poor families who spend much of their time on the street, but are still in school. The youth will be taught to apply skills learned through the sports program to other personal and community needs, such as employment, health education, and community development.

The sports program will be integrated into school and youth sports programs to maximize existing public and private resources, and will also integrate street children into mainstream youth activities. The program will teach these youth to organize, schedule, manage and direct the program and be responsible for much of the decision making.

Children in school will participate on teams at the school or near their homes. Separate teams will be formed for children living on the streets. A sports office located in the center of the city where street children live and work will serve as headquarters for the sports program. The sports program will pay special attention to maintaining regular attendance of street children whose transient lifestyle tends to make their involvement sporadic.

The director of the National Center for the Development of Human Resources chaired the conference and agreed to chair the project's planning committee. Representatives of the mayor's office and the Ministry of Education in each of the cities were present and in agreement with the concept.

Local groups attending the meeting included the Boy Scouts, representing 30 troops, three city football associations, and 15 various other sports clubs and associations, and the Home for Christian Boys and Girls.

UNICEF's Basic Services Unit monitors all programs in

country for children in especially difficult circumstances. Partners of the Americas is interested in the project and the local representative thinks he can solicit support from a stateside partner in New Jersey. Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services, and Plan International each have a project in one of the cities and are interested in supporting the project.

Peace Corps has been involved in the planning of this program from its inception and has agreed to supply Volunteers on a multi- and cross-sectorial basis over the next eight years. A Peace Corps Youth Development Advisory Committee will be formed to conduct crucial contact, communication and liaison activities with appropriate ministries.

Possible Peace Corps Project Activities

Use Peace Corps' five current education Volunteers located in one of the secondary cities to train local counterparts to conduct preliminary surveys in each zone of the three cities to determine existing sports activities.

Based on survey results, assist in the design and implementation of the initial sports program.

Provide a team of urban community development and small business Volunteers for each of the proposed project cities during the first six years to:

Assist community leaders in organizing and coordinating sports activities.

Organize and train youth to plan, schedule and manage sports activities.

Develop leadership training/team building programs and guides for the project.

Network with and recruit other organizations to provide necessary technical and financial assistance, including the contribution of sports equipment.

Develop job placement, artisan and/or vocational training programs for youth from the sports program.

Develop micro-enterprise training for youth.

Provide additional youth development Volunteers in skill areas to be determined by community needs (obtained from surveys) as well as from experience gained during the first two years of the project.

CONSERVATION CORPS:
Helping Improve the Environment

Ever since Josie can remember, she and her mother went to the river that ran through the middle of her neighborhood to draw water for drinking, cooking, laundry and bathing. Some people, mostly men, bathed right in the river. Josie recalls that when she was very small the water in the river seemed so much clearer.

She often asked her mother why the water was not as clear any more, and if it was okay to drink the water or cook with it because it was so dark. Her mother was always too busy filling buckets and thinking about all the work she had to do to answer Josie. She usually said to her, "At 12 years old you're too young to ask all these questions. Why don't you help me instead of thinking so much."

Since Josie didn't get her answer to the questions at home, she started asking her next door neighbor, Mr. Flomo, who was a teacher at the local school. He, too, was surprised by Josie's interest in the water. It wasn't a subject he usually discussed. But he thought this was a good opportunity to talk about the problem, so he gave Josie and some of the neighborhood children an assignment. He asked them to spend the next week going through the neighborhood looking for all the sources that made the river water dirty. Then they would discuss them, and also discuss things they could do to help clean up the water.

Josie and her friends brought Mr. Flomo their lists based on their observations and conversations with their parents and relatives. They realized the river water got dirty from sources outside their neighborhood, too, but did not know the exact sources. They wanted to know more and to do something about the problem. Mr. Flomo had a friend who belonged to the local Conservation Society and asked him to come speak with the children. Seeing the positive response from them, Mr. Flomo and his friend decided to seek other ways to channel this interest into positive action.

Sam had lived on the city street with his friends for four years. He was the only one in the group of six boys who was not born and raised in the city. Sam came from a large, poor family that lived on a farm where his father raised a few chickens and grew rice. Sam loved the open spaces, the animals and the clear stream where he used to swim. But when he was 10, he left the village because his father constantly beat him.

All of Sam's friends came from the city and they laughed at him when he talked about life on a farm — the animals, all the fruit trees, and streams. Sam really missed that part of village life. But he also enjoyed the excitement of the city.

To make money, he and his friends often went to the city dump to look for things that they could sell. But they discovered the hard way that the dump was a dangerous place. Sam once stepped on a sharp object and lost a lot of blood. His friends carried him to the nurse at the outreach center for street children.

The nurse warned him that he could have died or lost his foot because of this bad cut and warned him against going to the dump any more. Even though it took many weeks for his foot to heal, Sam did go to the dump again with his friends. When they were hungry, they did not worry about danger. This time, one of his friends found a bottle with some liquid in it. It had a strong odor like the glue they sniffed to get high. But this was a dangerous toxic chemical and it made his friend, Jonathan, very sick. The other boys carried him to the outreach center and the nurse rushed him to a clinic. Later, the boys showed the center director the bottle and he told them it was an agricultural chemical used for killing insects.

It was at times like this that Sam longed most to be back in the village where there was lots of fruit to eat, streams to swim in, animals to take care of and no worries about drinking something dangerous.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Youth-at-risk, both in school and on the street, are often

unaware of the environmental influences on their lives — physical and mental. For example, many urban youth-at-risk are physically affected by poor water and sanitation. They do not know how to avoid such problems nor understand how they could help others avoid them. Growing up in slums, shanty towns or on city streets, most of these youth have had little exposure to or understanding of nature, wildlife and other positive environmental influences. They have little, if any, opportunity to learn about and be exposed to these influences. In addition, they are unaware of the social environment affecting their lives and how to to learn about and develop good work habits, a sense of responsibility, dependability and self-discipline.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

Youth-at-risk typically live in urban physical environments which are not conducive to good health. Poor water polluted by domestic sewage, industrial chemicals and resulting runoff cause numerous diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid. In addition, standing water and excessive garbage breeds mosquitoes which carry malaria and other insect-borne diseases. Garbage dumps and landfills contain toxic materials and are sources of accidental cuts and other injuries. And in some major cities, noise and air pollution are serious threats to the entire population.

Such poor environmental conditions not only threaten physical health but also contribute to a mental atmosphere of apathy and indifference that stifles an appreciation of a quality environment and a desire to preserve it. Few educational programs that teach about environmental dangers and how they can be avoided are available to urban youth-at-risk. There are also few incentives or programs that channel the energies of youth-at-risk towards constructive environmental action and that help them develop a sense of individual and community responsibility.

Some urban youth-at-risk have migrated from rural areas, but most have grown up in the city and have not been exposed to the beauty of nature, the need to preserve natural habitats and wildlife in rural areas or the importance these things have on the quality of the environment.

In many places where youth have had the chance to better understand the natural environment, they have learned not only to appreciate that environment, but also have learned about themselves, about hard work and self-discipline and how to better operate in a society growing ever more complex.

PEACE CORPS INVOLVEMENT

Possible Contacts For Collaboration

Following a regional youth and environmental conference in a neighboring country, several participants returned home with representatives of the California Conservation Corps to organize a task force to start a conservation corps.

The task force was composed of representatives of the Ministries of Fisheries, Forestry and Social Services, and several local NGOs working with street children and the environment including Opportunities for Youth, the Center for Environmental Studies, the Audubon Society, and the Peace Corps. The task force agreed that through a well-organized conservation work program youth-at-risk could learn through hands-on experience:

- about the environment, the growing environmental concerns in their community and country, and how/ where they could make a difference.
- skills that would help them cope in an ever more complex society.
- good work habits by developing responsibility, dependability, self-discipline, and teamwork.

The task force adapted conservation corps approaches used in other countries to fit the context of their own culture and environmental concerns. They decided to organize both rural and urban conservation work programs to help give youth a more complete understanding of their environment.

Work projects will be supervised by adult and peer trainers who will receive professional environmental training and will

serve as mentors and role models to the youth. Each crew of approximately 20 youth participants will be given a work project that can be completed in the two week program. The work project will teach leadership and team building. Interspersed in the daily routine will be both formal and informal environmental education and time for reflecting on the experience through writing, talking or acting out their impressions of what they are learning.

Urban projects will include organizing boys and girls clubs that will, as a part of their activity, conduct clean-up campaigns, recycle trash, and take nature awareness walks. Rural projects will include an educational, work-oriented, two-week trip to a national park several hours outside of the capital.

To be successful, the task force agreed the program must have public support and that the best way to gain this support was through a successful demonstration, or pilot, project.

They agreed that the most effective organizational structure would be to form a non-governmental organization funded through grants from several large local industries that impact the environment, as well as from a local credit union league, and several international donors.

The task force decided to involve both in-school youth-at-risk and street children between the ages of 15 and 19 in the program. The recruitment process will include visits to high schools located in poor neighborhoods and to the institutions working with street children. The site for the rural conservation work will be in a national wildlife reserve. The urban conservation work will be conducted in two pilot cities.

Possible Peace Corps Project Activities

Use current Peace Corps Volunteers to support the logistical and organizational efforts of the task force, to recruit and train staff and recruit youth participants.

Assist in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the pilot work programs and based on this experience assist in redesigning a long-term program.

Provide a team of urban community development and environmental Volunteers to work in each of the urban and rural conservation work sites during the first six years to:

Coordinate recruitment of staff and youth participants.

Design and coordinate work programs.

Provide to crew supervisors the requisite environmental and leadership training.

Develop training curricula and materials.

Assist in fundraising for the program.

Network with and recruit other organizations to provide necessary technical and financial assistance, including building materials, tools and equipment.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SECONDARY ASSIGNMENTS:
Working With Youth-At-Risk

A Volunteer who has available time may take an interest in youth-at-risk and through regular contact begin to understand their needs and be moved to help them. Many of the "Possible Peace Corps Activities" discussed in each of the scenarios above can provide ways for Volunteers to become involved in youth development activities.

In addition, rural Volunteers in fields such as agriculture, fisheries, or the environment might link up with urban street kids by operating rural weekend outings in which the street children are exposed to new ideas, skills, values of family and community, and fellowship with rural youth.

The understanding gained from this direct contact with youth-at-risk is essential in effectively meet individual needs and plan services to programs. Through this contact, a Volunteer may be a catalyst or link in bringing the needs of street children or other youth-at-risk to the attention of those many individuals or organizations who can help.

Peace Corps Volunteers and staff should be cautioned, however, to use wisdom in when and how deeply Volunteers become involved with these youth. There is the risk of setting up an artificial support system that may disappear when the Volunteer leaves. Emotional attachments to such youth can become strong and may distract Volunteers from accomplishing their primary project activity. Furthermore, Volunteers may not have the training, expertise, or resources to aid with certain problems.

Some cultures may object to foreigners being involved with "their kids" or clearance may be needed from the local government. Culturally sensitive issues such as AIDS and sex education, for example, may be handled better by local people. AIDS experts encourage foreigners to seek and/or train local people to provide such education.

Most importantly, Volunteers should use what they learn from working with youth-at-risk to establish or contribute to on-going projects. Because of the short-term nature of such Volunteer contacts, Peace Corps staff should monitor these secondary activities to assess the potential for developing a primary Peace Corps project.

This programming guide was written by Charles Wattles under contract to Peace Corps' Office of Training and Support.

NOTES